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ABSTRACT

Of the many women who have contributed to the making of knowledge in composition, three theorists in particular are excellent representatives of a feminine rhetoric that is changing the rhetorical tradition from hierarchy and authoritative achievement to a relational, collaborative, and integrated process. Mina Shaughnessy is the quintessential practitioner/inquirer--dedicated, intolerant of inequalities in education, and determined to strengthen the marginalized, to let them learn. Her goal is to empower the writer by knowledge through relational and collaborative measures. Her practice led to the theory that teachers and students learn most as equal participants in a dialogic process. Next, Linda Flower is a formalist, basing her research on the construction of a model and on the testing of that model against the system it represents. Flower's rhetoric, with its emphasis on transformation, growth and learning, and its problem-solving approach, contrasts with an androcentric rhetoric's aim to "win" and establish authority. Not insignificant is her considerable involvement in collaboratively conducted and authored research. Finally, Janet Emig has revolutionized composition theory and practice with her focus on writing as a mode of learning. She characterized composition as at a pre-paradigmatic stage and demonstrated that intellectual history is a tacit tradition, founded on multi-disciplinary approaches. Her philosophy of writing is unabashedly human-centered, her rhetoric founded on collaboration and community. Because of these women's contributions, rhetoric now includes relationship, growth, community, and learning as well as achievement, authoritative weight, and victory. (Twenty-five references are attached.) (KEH)

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Examining Contemporary Women Rhetoricians: Is There a Feminine Rhetoric?

When Steven North's 1987 book, The Making of Knowledge in Composition was first published, many of us who directed or taught in writing programs looked to it for validation of our work. The book is concerned with what North calls modes of inquiry: "the steps an inquirer follows in making a contribution to a field of knowledge--as they operate within methodological communities, or groups of inquirers united by their allegiance to one such mode."

This knowledge must be seen as a social construct, the truth value of which is a function of a given community's commitment to it. Furthermore, kinds of knowledge aren't automatically interchangeable; knowledge doesn't cross community borders with impunity. The old, two-part image of knowledge (that knowledge consists of theory, which then informs practice) won't serve.

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Each mode of inquiry, including practice, can produce its own brand of theory.

North's book is organized around the three modes of inquiry, Practice, Scholarship and Research, and their respective methodological communities. His organizational scheme appealed to me greatly. Worth was assigned to a variety of modes and methods, and there was the possibility of credence for the work of large numbers of teachers who study what they do as they do it. North's conception about how knowledge is made in composition "leaves room for individuals to be fluent knowledge-makers in more than one community" (North 2). He cites Janet Emig as an example of multiple community membership by calling her a leading member of the clinician's community as well as the philosopher's community.

I felt some satisfaction when I began reading North. I thought: Here's someone who respects practice as a mode of inquiry, someone who understands that a variety of methodological communities contribute to our knowledge of composition, someone who recognizes that "theorists" aren't only found among traditional scholars. And even, perhaps, someone who acknowledges that women have made knowledge in composition. Back then, in 1987, I thought, this is it. The year when the field of composition stops ignoring the "natives."

Two-and-a-half years later, in October of 1989, I eagerly registered for a conference sponsored by the University of Texas

at Arlington called "Writing Histories of Rhetoric." The program devoted a sizable chunk of time to alternative or revisionary histories, and I had just begun a study of contemporary women rhetoricians. Here I would meet people interested in giving voice to the outsiders--people of color and women. Here I would find the rhetoric to legitimize my contemporary history of women rhetoricians.

It was my hypothesis that women's work in rhetoric had been neglected. When students of rhetoric are asked to name important names in the theory of rhetoric, they name Burke, Booth, Perelman and Kinneavy. Emig, Shaughnessy, Flower and Lunsford are never mentioned in the first rank, and are usually not even considered true rhetoricians. Compositionists perhaps, but not rhetoricians.

It was time, I thought, to tear down some of the artificial walls that had been built segregating composition (that motley collection of "mere practitioners") from rhetoric (that select brotherhood of theorists). A truer conception of Rhetoric was as a history of theories of composition. Further, a more accurate history was created when inclusivity was the guide in selecting what was appropriate for our study. The conference on writing histories of Rhetoric would be a place to learn how to do that, I thought.

I met revisionists Susan Jarrett, John Schilb, James Berlin and Sharon Crowley at that conference, and I was urged by them to

not disinterestedly tolerate a range of beliefs, but to act like a rhetorician: to decide which voices in the history of rhetoric to attend to; to listen for the subversive or silent voices; and, having heard them, to judge their merit. It sounded good to me.

But, at that same conference, I also heard that the history of rhetoric has little to do with composition, that they might even be two entirely separate things, and, what's more, that compositionists inappropriately elevate themselves. I'll not soon forget Michael Halloran's casual (and innocent) remark about Linda Flower: "Flower, you know, would say she's a rhetorician."

Even at a conference where alternative histories of our discipline are demanded, it's still possible for composition to be ghettoized and still possible to say there's not <u>theory</u> in the <u>practice</u> of women and minorities.

North's book and the historiography conference are cause for celebration and cause for consternation. Because they called for a new vision, for new connections, and a constant critique of what is accepted, they are cause for celebration. But because the state of our discipline still makes it difficult to answer that call, they are cause for consternation. Indeed, North's work is antithetical in that he pleads for the restoration of practice as a viable means of inquiry while leveling biting attacks on various practitioners (as he does with other methodological communities throughout). And, of course, the historiography

conference was well attended by androcentric traditionalists.

It is important for us, as members of one or more methodological communities engaged in the making of knowledge in composition, to recognize that, despite our mode of inquiry--practice, scholarship or research--we are all involved in theory, but on our own terms. Rather than measure the value of practitioner knowledge against ethnographer standards, each brand of knowledge should be valued on its own terms, and the collection of knowledges should be the whole that is the discipline of composition.

But that goal, North's goal, is suspect because it calls for a relational rather than a hierarchical arrangement of people making knowledge in composition. Similarly, the historiography conferees who called for gendered analyses to reveal what has been forgotten or ignored, who wondered what rhetoric has become because women were forced out of it, are suspect as well.

Unquestionably, it isn't easy to substitute relational thinking for hierarchical thinking, to embrace inclusivity when exclusivity has been the norm for centuries. As Adrienne Rich says so eloquently:

> It is not easy to think like a woman in a man's world . . . To think like a woman in a man's world means thinking critically, refusing to accept the givens, making connections between facts and ideas which men have left unconnected . . . It means a constant critique of language, for as Wittgenstein (no feminist) observed, "the limits of

my language are the limits of my world."

I think many women rhetoricians struggle to think like women in a man's world. Of the many women who have contributed to the making of knowledge in composition, there are three who are excellent representatives of the modes of inquiry identified by North. It is they I would like to briefly introduce as a few loud voices in Composition who have been silenced in Rhetoric.

Janet Emig. Linda Flower. Mina Shaughnessy.

In order to hear these women properly, it is important to put their work in the context of feminist inquiry. Nancy Chodorow's The Reproduction of Mothering and Carol Gilligan's In a Different Voice provide us with a framework for understanding these uniquely feminine voices.

These feminist theorists agree that men and women have different conceptions of self and different modes of interaction with others as a result of their different experiences--especially their early relationships with their primary parents, their mothers.

Chodorow says girls and boys develop different relational capacities as a result of growing up in a family in which women mother. A girl's gender role identification processes "are more continuously embedded in and mediated by her ongoing relationship with her mother" (176). The boy, on the other hand, gives

up, in addition to his attachment to his mother, his primary identification with her. Feminine identification processes are relational, whereas masculine identification processes deny relationship.

Gilligan differentiates men's and women's thinking about moral issues with two metaphors: the web and the ladder. Women define morality in terms of conflicting responsibilities rather than competing rights; men equate morality and fairness, and link moral development to the understanding of rights and rules. Women operate in a web, suggesting interconnectedness and entrapment; men operate on a ladder, suggesting achievement orientation, hierarchical thinking and escape.

The work of these feminist researchers suggests that men and women differ in their relational capacities and in their moral and intellectual development.

The relational, inclusive look at the history of Composition and Rhetoric called for by North, Jarrett, Berlin, Crowley, Schilb and others might be thought of as a "feminine look" because it draws on the relational, integrated ways of knowing that research has identified as particularly female. In a fascinating article called "Composing as a Woman," Elizabeth Flynn draws an even more dramatic conclusion:

> The field of composition studies could be described as a feminization of our previous conceptions of how writers

> write and how writing should be taught. Rather than enshrining the text in its final form, composition specialists demonstrate that the works produced by established authors are often the result of an extended, frequently enormously frustrating process . . . . In a sense, composition specialists replace the figure of the authoritative father with an image of a nurturing mother. . . . We are dealing with a field that, from the beginning, has welcomed contributions from women--indeed, has been shaped by women.

Emig, Flower and Shaughnessy are certainly "foremothers" in Composition. It is my contention that they are rhetoricians as well, and what's more, their rhetoric is feminine: relational, collaborative, integrated--involved in ongoing process and growth, rather than hierarchy and authoritative achievement. No thorough analysis is possible in this short paper, but it's useful to begin by placing these three theorists in the modes of inquiry established by North. Shaughnessy is the premier practitioner; Flower represents the researchers and Emig (though also a researcher) stands as one of modern Rhetoric's principal scholars.

Shaughnessy's inquiry resulted when her university, CUNY, experienced the cataclysmic shift to open admissions. Errors and Expectations, the book North calls the epitome of the practical investigator at work, is where Shaughnessy systematically discovers the "whys" for her basic writers' difficulties. In her body of work, Shaughnessy urges teachers to "dive in" (CCC, 1976) to "remediate themselves" by careful observation of

themselves as writers, as well as their students. She urges them to become students in community with their own students, to believe in their students' educability and to view their discourse as neither random or illogical, but ingeniously adaptive. Shaughnessy is the quintessential practitioner/ inquirer--dedicated, altruistic, intolerant of inequalities in education, determined to strengthen the marginalized, to let them learn. The goal of Shaughnessy's rhetoric echoes the philosophy of Paulo Freire in his landmark book Pedagogy of the Oppressed: "to give voice to those with inexpressible pain," to empower by knowledge. Perhaps more than any other in our profession, Mina Shaughnessy has raised our collective consciousness about the rights and abilities of basic writers. She did this by transforming her practice into inquiry, when "standard procedures" no longer worked. Her goal is the growth and learning of the community of basic writers, through a relational, collaborative rhetoric. Her practice led her to the theory that teachers and students learn most as equal participants in a dialogic process.

Linda Flower is called a formalist by North, and as a member of that methodological community, practices within the mode of inquiry named Research. Formalist research is based on the construction of a model and the testing of that model against the system it represents. The model created by Linda Flower and her

collaborator, cognitive psychologist John Hayes, is not treated kindly by North, primarily because he views their model of the writing process as incomplete. He calls Flower's model one-dimensional because it treats the mind as a problem-solver and ignores metaphoric and imaginative thinking. However, in Flower's problem-solving approach, imaginative thinking is seen as another kind of heuristic or problem-solving procedure. Flower says, "People use basic problem-solving procedures to solve all kinds of 'problems,' which range from inventing a mouse trap to designing a course syllabus to writing a sonnet" (CCC 1977). The goal of Flower's work is consistent. Whether describing writing as problem-solving, writer- or reader-based prose, or most recently "rhetorical reading," Flower zeroes in on a transformation process. As writers transform themselves, gain self-conscious control, their knowledge develops. Flower says:

> Writers and teachers of writing have long argued that one learns through the act of writing itself, but it has been difficult to support the claim in other ways. However, if one studies the process by which a writer uses a goal to generate ideas, then consolidates those ideas and uses them to revise or regenerate new, more complex goals, one can see this learning process in action (CCC 1981).

Flower's rhetoric, with its emphasis on transformation, growth and learning, and its problem-solving approach, contrasts with an androcentric rhetoric's aim to "win" and establish

authority. Not insignificant is Flower's considerable involvement in collaboratively conducted and authored research. As Lunsford and Ede have discovered, collaboration often accompanies this new rhetoric (see Rhetoric in a New Key, MLA 1988).

Janet Emig's study, The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders, revolutionized composition theory and practice. Her case-study of eight student writers lies, according to North, between experimental inquiry and ethnography. North calls Emig a methodological waffler, a sometime clinician, sometime philosopher. Because Emig has studied her own research and that of her colleagues and forebears to account for her field's fundamental assumptions and beliefs, she is certainly a philosopher, and I would focus on that aspect of her work here. Emig demonstrates writing as a mode of learning (CCC 77). She argues, "Writing, through its inherent reinforcing cycle involving hand, eye, and brain marks a uniquely more powerful multi-representational mode for learning" (124-25). With this claim, Emig spearheaded a crucial line of inquiry that has profoundly affected composition studies. In fact, the phenomenon of Writing Across the Curriculum has its roots in a writing-as-learning philosophy. In 1980, Emig characterized composition as at a pre-paradigmatic stage, a stage of revolutionary scientific activity. She demonstrates that our intellectual history is a tacit tradition, founded on multi-disciplinary approaches,

because "powerful and beautiful explanations for how and why persons write reside in many disciplines" ("Tacit Tradition" 155). Emig creates a credo of the writing community:

> We believe:
> that almost all persons can write and want to write;
> that not writing or not wanting to write is unnatural;
> that, if either occurs, something major has been subverted in a mind, a life;
> That as teachers and researchers we must try to help make writing natural again, and necessary.
> Credo; credemus. And so may we continue together.

Her philosophy of writing is unabashedly human-centered, her rhetoric founded on collaboration and community. It's not surprising that Emig titled a collection of her essays The Web of Meaning. Her thinking, her rhetoric is web-like, interconnected, feminine.

It is impossible to draw firm conclusions from such a brief look at these three women. Still, there is enough here to suggest that women do rhetoric differently, that the rhetorical tradition is being reinvented by them, and with their help effective language use will no longer be judged solely on the basis of achievement, authoritative weight, and victory. Because of their contributions, rhetoric will also be judged on the basis of relationship, growth, community and learning. And we, symbol-using, meaning-making creatures, will profit from this feminine rhetoric.

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